

**GE-Pittsfield Citizen's Coordinating Council
Berkshire Community College
Susan B. Anthony Center**

**Meeting Highlights
June 2, 1999**

Prepared by the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution.

Participants

20 members of the CCC were present. There were 3 people in the audience.

Started at 5:45 p.m.

Welcome and Agenda Review

The proposed agenda was reviewed and agreed upon by all. Other agenda topics added:

- ?? How can CCC function better – clearer line to involvement and meaningful action by agencies.
- ?? Provision of baseline data on extent of exotics/invasives that may “take over”.
Bryan noted that this information was collected as part of the Ecological Study.
Data through Woods Pond is available. Agreed that only native plants be used on banks.

Presentation: *Review of “Possible Future Agenda Items”* (dated 1/6/99)

Item number 1 calls for discussion of the Newell Street and Silver Lake businesses and properties. It was suggested that a notice be put out to these people inviting them to a CCC meeting that will discuss this issue. Bryan noted that it might be best for these people to meet with EPA and invite the CCC to attend the meeting(s).

The next item discussed was exploring options for long term treatment of PCB's. Some members noted that it appears to be too late for other options to be considered – that the parties to the mediation have already ruled out treatment of any kind. Bryan noted that all discussions of disposal options have included explanations of why a certain action will or will not be taken. Concern was expressed by some CCC members that decisions were made without considering public input or evaluation. Bryan noted that decisions will be made taking into account both public comments and sound science. On the issue of landfilling versus treatment, Bryan noted that landfilling is much more cost effective than treatment. Other issues are that the more waste generated the more cost-effective treatment becomes. Improved technology may also make treatment more attractive in the future. Landfilling is a critical part of the Agreement in Principle (as noted to members during the creation of the CCC). EPA feels landfilling can be protective and is considered a protective remedy.

Several members voiced their opposition to landfilling. A passage from the EPA 1994 Public Involvement Plan (PIP) was read which cited high levels of PCB in Hill 78. Thus,

it was noted, it does not make sense to site the landfill near the school. A question was also asked about why the EPA Region that includes New York State is against landfilling (per published statement) but not Region 1 of EPA.

Bryan stated that EPA would ensure it knows what is coming out of the landfill before a decision is made. He also noted that any potential drainage would be away from the school.

Some discussion ensued about EPA's demonstrated willingness to discuss issues but that the impact of the discussions has not been seen. Some members also stated that cost considerations should include social and health care costs – that these costs can be and should be translated into dollars.

The CCC then decided to put aside further discussion of future agenda items in order to discuss how the CCC will function. Members stated that this seemed to be the basis of many of the concerns expressed at the meeting. Bryan assured everyone that all comments would be considered and also "responded to officially". He expressed his frustration at not being able to say more until the Consent Decree is completed. He believes that most people will like what EPA decides – that many of their suggestions will be used.

Jane asked if a more formal method was needed to convey information to agencies. They were also asked if they would like to review the CCC "charter". Some members expressed concern that vote taking would fractionalize the CCC. Some felt that agencies should have a way to gauge how the CCC as a whole feels but that this should not be done by voting. Some suggested canvassing the membership, e.g. asking "how many feel strongly.....". Others noted that the current process does not allow for gauging and the difficulty of knowing if an opinion expressed is an individual opinion or shared by other CCC members.

Jane reminded members that the CCC was designed to be a forum to share views but not make decisions. Also noted was that voting may result in re-evaluating CCC member representational issues. Some suggested renaming the CCC to something more in line with what they believe it is; a public meeting with designated representatives – but not a discussion forum.

Bryan was asked if he felt another process would enable the EPA to better gauge opinion. He said he has a good idea of how people feel due to the input he gets from the CCC and the many meetings he has with groups outside the CCC meetings. A member wondered why almost all questions are posed to Bryan/EPA and few to GE, who are also part of the decision making process.

Jane noted that the mandate from EPA was to form a body to share information and provide feedback to agencies. A decision-making body was not the goal. Someone wondered if taking "straw polls" would enable EPA to better organize requests for responses and timeframes.

Some CCC members commented that it may be too late to influence the Consent Decree and wondered if the CCC could be "elevated" to provide meaningful input on subsequent plans. If not, some wondered if the CCC should continue. It was suggested that this

issue be held until the Consent Decree is issued and then re-evaluate the mission of the CCC.

Bryan noted that some limitations were put on the CCC due to federal law. FACA, Federal Advisory Committee Act, requires getting input from a variety of sources. He noted that the CCC sets its own agenda. He also noted that the structure of the CCC allows a more “focussed” discussion than would likely occur at a public meeting. Also noted was that after the Consent Decree is out, all issues are open for discussion; all facts, plans, etc. will be available for comment. There will be at least a 45-day period for comment on the Consent Decree, which could be extended.

Jane asked members if they would like to develop a plan for discussing the Consent Decree, or more specifically, how its information might best be presented to them for comment. She noted that the document is expected to be very large.

Many members asked for a visit to the GE site (Hill 78, Building 71, school, economic development area). They stated that this would assist them in understanding the details of the Consent Decree. There was general agreement among the members that a site visit should be done. Jane asked if members would like to do this on the same day as a regular meeting or at some other time. Some felt it should be done in conjunction with a regular meeting while others felt it should not be done during a meeting. One member suggested that the visit be done after the release of the Consent Decree. GE said they would consider the request.

Lynn provided an update on the Residential Fill Project. She noted 48 properties are slated for removal and restoration this year.

Next meeting will be on July 7, 1999 at Berkshire Community College.